Preliminary Amendment of U.S. National Stage for International Application PCT/EP2003/008339 filed July 29, 2003

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1-7, without prejudice, and add new claims 8-16, in accordance with the following complete listing of all claims ever presented. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the instant application:

Claims 1-7 (Canceled)

Claim 8 (New): A process for producing conjugated linoleic acid, said process comprising:

(a) isomerizing a linoleic acid lower alkyl ester in the presence of an alkali metal alcoholate to form a conjugated linoleic acid lower alkyl ester;

(b) saponifying the conjugated linoleic acid lower alkyl ester in the presence of an aqueous lye to form a saponification product; and

(c) neutralizing the saponification product with phosphoric acid.

Claim 9 (New): The process according to claim 8, wherein the linoleic acid lower alkyl ester corresponds to the general formula (I):

$$R^1CO\text{-}OR^2 \qquad (I)$$

wherein R^1CO represents an acyl linoleyl group and R^2 represents a linear or branched alkyl group having from 1 to 5 carbon atoms.

Claim 10 (New): The process according to claim 8, wherein the isomerization is carried out at a temperature of from 90 to 150°C.

Claim 11 (New): The process according to claim 8, wherein the saponification is carried out at a temperature of from 40 to 90°C.

Claim 12 (New): The process according to claim 8, wherein the saponification is carried out until from 80 to 100% by weight of the conjugated linoleic acid lower alkyl ester is saponified.

Claim 13 (New): The process according to claim 8, wherein the saponification product is neutralized at a temperature of from 50 to 90°C.

Claim 14 (New): The process according to claim 8, further comprising phase separation following neutralization.

Claim 15 (New): The process according to claim 14, wherein the phase separation is carried out at a temperature of from 50 to 100°C.

Claim 16 (New): A process for producing conjugated linoleic acid, said process comprising:

(a) isomerizing a linoleic acid lower alkyl ester corresponding to the general formula (I), in the presence of an alkali metal alcoholate to form a conjugated linoleic acid lower alkyl ester, wherein the isomerization is carried out at a temperature of from 90 to 150°C:

$$R^1CO\text{-}OR^2 \qquad (I)$$

wherein R^1CO represents an acyl linoleyl group and R^2 represents a linear or branched alkyl group having from 1 to 5 carbon atoms;

(b) saponifying the conjugated linoleic acid lower alkyl ester in the presence of an aqueous lye to form a saponification product, wherein the saponification is carried out at a temperature of from 40 to 90°C; and

(c) neutralizing the saponification product with phosphoric acid at a temperature of from 50 to 90°C.